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What Is a Leader?

Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric, is reported to have called his direct reports together one day. He issued a three-word dictum—"Don't manage! Lead!"—and then promptly left the room. Many were left wondering, "What's the difference?"

That's an important question, so it seems logical that we begin a book on leadership by examining the difference between managing and leading, between a manager and a leader.

What Is a Manager?

The classic definition of a manager is one who gets done through other people. You may be planning, directing, controlling, hiring, delegating, assigning, organizing, motivating, disciplining, or doing any number of other things managers do on a daily basis. No matter what you do, though, you are working toward a goal by helping others do their work.

You are a manager if:

1. **You direct the work, rather than perform it.** Are you frequently tempted to pitch in on a regular basis or to do the work yourself, rather than delegate? If so, you're not spending your time wisely or well. Occasionally, you may have to roll up your sleeves and work with the team on a rush project. Remember, though, you were hired to manage the staff's work—not to be part of the staff.
2. **You have responsibilities for hiring, firing, training, and disciplining employees.** Staff development is an important part of your job. Such development often determines whether staff members stay with an organization or leave for better opportunities. In addition to regular performance appraisals, you should work with each person you manage to determine a career path.
3. **You exercise authority over the quality of work and the conditions under which it is performed**. As a manager, your first obligation is to your people. In part, this obligation means you work to ensure a safe environment for them and to uncover potential threats to that environment. (Does your team know what to do, for example, if all the lights suddenly went out or if a bomb threat were received?) The obligation also means you owe your customers—internal or external—the highest-quality outputs.
4. **You serve as a liaison between employees and upper management.** Managers wear many hats. Among them: traffic cop, psychologist, coach, minister, diplomat, and envoy. In this role, you serve as the link between those doing the work and those who need or benefit from the work being done. The liaison serves as a buffer, a praiser, a translator, and a seeker-of-resources to ensure the work is done more efficiently and the employees are recognized when they've completed it.
5. **You motivate employees and contribute to a culture of accomplishment.** You've no doubt heard that the difference

between ordinary and extraordinary is "that little extra." If you're totally committed to your job as manager, then you're aware of the need to motivate, to instill pride, to create a climate in which innovation can flourish.

> **Work Smarter**
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> Carry a pad and pencil with you for one full day and note every single action you take and how much time it requires. At the end of the day, determine the percentage of time you spent on each activity. Then review the list and put a star next to the activities that helped advance the organizational or departmental mission. Is there a match between important and time-consuming actions? If not, set some new priorities.

What Is a Leader?

While the manager works to carry out the aims of the organization, the leader serves to create new aims, tweak old ones, or initiate new courses of action. Leadership is what Sam Walton was promoting when he encouraged people to "eliminate the dumb." The leader challenges the status quo, in the most positive and diplomatic of ways, in order to continuously improve. It is the leader we turn to when we feel that "good enough" is not.

You are a leader if:

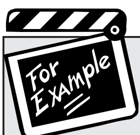
1. **You believe that, working in concert with others, you can make a difference.** It's fairly easy to make money. But leaders strive to make a *difference*. They are willing to make sacrifices and to inspire others to do the same. When John F. Kennedy inspired Americans to give up their life style and join the Peace Corps, he admitted he was asking them to accept the "toughest job you'll ever love."

2. **You create something of value that did not exist before.** When you hear of someone being a leader in a particular field or when you hear of something being the leading edge, you know that person or that thing stands out by virtue of being first or being different. If you can point to one improvement you have implemented in the last six months, you can rightfully call yourself a leader.

3. **You exhibit positive energy.** We gravitate toward individuals who exude confidence. Their magnetism attracts us and we become willing followers. Call it charisma, call it enthusiasm, but know that such individuals easily lead others by virtue of their passion for accomplishment. If you fit this description, then you are known for the way you "attack" various tasks. Your fervor is unbridled. You see hurdles as things to overcome. In short, your energy energizes others.

4. **You actualize.** The true leader goes beyond vision to create a new reality. He* actualizes the dream he has inspired in others. In the process of self-actualizing, the leader is becoming all that he can be and making others believe they can do the same. The leader is committed. He believes the collective actions of the whole team will lead to mission accomplishment.

5. **You welcome change.** Through his commitment to action, the leader treads virgin territory. He spots vacuums and works to fill them. He sees what is invisible and inspires others to make the ideal real. Leaders know that change is progress. And to lessen the fear that progress instills, the leader is out front. He knows that he must take an "I'll go first" approach to convince others that change is not only necessary, but that it can be good.



Doubly Dedicated

The combination of intellectual and emotional dedication is what coach Vince Lombardi alluded to when he said, "Some guys play with their heads and sure, you need to be smart to be number one in anything you try. But most important, you've got to play with your heart. If you're lucky enough to find a guy with a lot of head and a lot of heart, he'll never come off the field second."

What Traits Do Leaders Exhibit?

Leadership reflects a wide spectrum of traits—all of them admirable, all of them beneficial to others. Because the study of

*For the sake of ease in writing and reading, gender references will be alternated chapter by chapter.

leadership in an ongoing one, there will never be full agreement on what constitutes leadership traits. Nor will students of leadership agree on whether leaders are made or born. Nonetheless, there are certain characteristics that all leaders seem to possess. We'll explore them here. As we do so, make some mental comparisons. Ask yourself, "To what extent do I possess these qualities?"

> **Obtain Approval**
> Long-sighted passion has a way of pushing practicality aside. In your rush toward goal attainment, don't overlook conferring with those whose approval you'll need along the way. This includes upper management but also, possibly, customers and other departments that will be impacted by the changes you are proposing.

Courage

Philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer wisely and wryly observed that "all truth goes through three stages. First it is ridiculed. Then it is violently opposed. Finally, it is accepted as self-evident." Leaders who dare to do something are prepared for opposition. They often take a courageous stand, suggesting that even if something "ain't broke," perhaps it should be fixed nonetheless. Leaders have the courage of their convictions and are ready to be ridiculed, opposed, and ultimately agreed with.

One tool that will help you prepare for the opposition a new idea might engender is called the ABCD Approach. Let's walk through the process. First, think of some way the work environment could be improved. You may want to consider a way to expedite a work process or to improve morale, to develop a new orientation program or to enlist Subject Matter Experts (SME) to conduct some training.

> **To Avoid Criticism**
> It's pretty easy to avoid criticism, al least according to philosopher Elbert Hubbard.
> Just "do nothing, say nothing, be nothing." Leaders know when their convictions lead them away from conventional thinking, they're bound to hear skeptics complain and ridicule and deride. Only do-nothing people can escape criticism. Surely, you're not one of those.

Whatever your idea is, subject it first to the "A" element: *Anticipate objections*. Ask yourself who is likely to offer what objections to the plan you will propose.

Once you've identified the individuals and the specific negative reactions you're likely to encounter, you can take steps to prepare yourself for the persuading you'll have to do. Cite precedents as part of your persuasion effort. Also arm yourself with statistics to strengthen your position. Finally, garner support—ideally you can quote someone in senior management—and let the resisters know how widespread the approval for your plan actually is.

The "B" aspect of this approach asks you to *"Benefitize"*—i.e., to list all the benefits for various individuals and groups if your project is implemented. The WIIFM Factor ("What's in It for Me?") exerts powerful influence on those you may be trying to win over. Again, whenever possible, cite figures to substantiate the advantages of your proposal.

Many plans never get beyond the planning stage because planners fail to take into account all the individuals and things that might be impacted by the plan, once implemented. The "C" part of the ABCD plan asks you to *Categorize*—to think of all the individuals, departments, groups, schedules, budgets, publicity, locations, etc. that you need to consider and take care of. You should spend as much time on this aspect of initiating a leadership project as you spend on actually developing the project.

Not until you've spent considerable time, energy, and effort on the first three letters of the ABCD Approach should you start the final stage. "D" means *Develop your plans*.

As you do so, don't hesitate to do your homework. Talk to others who may have undertaken an equally ambitious project in the past. Read as much as you can, surf the Net, and subject your plan to the scrutiny of several people whose opinion you respect. Once you've fully developed the plan of action, begin to implement it, assigning to the members of your team the tasks best suited to their individual talents.

Pride

> **Smart Managing**
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> **Leaders Take Pride and Instill Pride**
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> Leaders are proud of what they are accomplishing and even more proud of what their followers are accomplishing. Pride does not evolve on its own, however. The leader must take steps to ensure the proper conditions are in place.

Not only does the leader take pride in his accomplishments, he also creates an atmosphere that allows others to do the same. W. Edwards Deming, one of the founding fathers of the quality movement, asserted that employees are rightfully entitled to the "pride of workmanship." Essential to that pride are job security, expectations, clear communications, and the proper tools.

How does the leader instill pride? In part, by making followers feel that their efforts are meaningful. In part, by setting the goal and then moving out of the way. (Many leaders subscribe to General George S. Patton's advice: "Give direction, not directions.") Leaders also reinforce expectations, monitor the work being done, set limits of authority and responsibility, and do all they can to help followers get the job done and get it done well.

Here are some of the responsibilities faced by managers who lead. In the blank space before each, write one of these letters to indicate which pride-inducing element is being addressed:

Goal-setting = **G** Monitor = **M**
Communications = **C** Tools = **T**

___ Setting deadlines	___ Allocating resources
___ Commending	___ Coaching
___ Measuring outcomes	___ Writing reports
___ Giving instructions	___ Gathering data
___ Providing training	___ Developing standards
___ Aligning task with talent	___ Sharing information

What other responsibilities have you assumed as you worked to instill pride in the work being done? Make a note or two in response to this question and then talk to other managers/leaders who make a determined effort to develop pride.

Sincerity

Leaders show their humanness in several different ways. They manage to convey sincere concern for other people, genuine interest in subjects other than themselves. Given the nature of technology, mega-mergers, and the vastness of customer-supplier networks, it's not always easy for leaders to show a personal touch. Nonetheless, you'll need to find ways to reach out and touch those who are following you and those who are affected by those who are following you.

Your efforts can be as expansive as events planned to celebrate success or as small as a thank-you. But . . . they should be ongoing, genuine, and *varied*. (After all, if everyone is "wonderful," no one is wonderful. Your efforts to show appreciation will fizzle if they are repeated too often and/or if they are always the same.)

One of the best ways to demonstrate you truly care about others is help them see in themselves what is so apparent to you. Here's an example to illustrate this point. If you're sending a letter of commendation to someone, send along a folder as well. The folder, labeled "Success" or some other complimentary term, will hold the letter and all such recognitions the person has received in the past and will receive in the future. Suggest that the recipient pull out the folder whenever barriers seem insurmountable. By scanning the recommendations and commendations he's received, the individual cannot help but be energized.

Adaptability

We live not only in a culture of chaos, but also in an age of paradox. We're told to do more with less. We admire "rugged individualists," yet we're expected to be team players. We're encouraged to make elaborate plans and then we're told the future is happening so quickly, it's impossible to plan for it. We learn, over time, that the very skills that enabled us to succeed early on can cause our later failures. We're encouraged to organize but are taught that chaos must reign, if only for a

while. We find ourselves agreeing with Sophocles, who noted, "There is a point beyond which even justice becomes unjust."

The leader takes all these contradictions in stride, knowing that the individuals and institutions we revere today can easily wind up in the trash heap of tradition tomorrow. The leader is able to see both sides of the picture, to maintain a balanced perspective like that of Janus, the ancient Roman god. His picture was shown on coins with two profiles: one looked back over the year just ended, the other looked toward the year about to begin. (The month of January is named for Janus.)

To lead is to hold or at least entertain opposing points of view. You've no doubt developed some flexibility by this point in your managerial career so you can consider conflicting ideas. It is safe to say you'll need even more flexibility as computers encourage multi-tasking and multi-thinking at an ever-dizzying pace. Demonstrate your flexibility by taking the suggestions here and in the chapters to follow and adapting them to your own special circumstances.

> **Information Pressure**
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> You no doubt feel some "information pressure" in your current job. It's the feeling that comes from having too much to read, digest, and learn in too little time. The experts predict that within 10 years, such pressure will be 32 times greater than it is today. Begin now to find ways to streamline intellectual inputs. Filtering your e-mail is one way. Consciously work to find other ways.

Influence

"The key to leadership today," Ken Blanchard maintains, "is influence, not authority." Leaders know how to influence others, to persuade them to a higher calling.

If you intend to lead others, you can't depend on the authority of your managerial position. It can help you, but it can also harm you when trying to reach those who resist "authority figures."

Here are questions designed to help you analyze your influence efforts and to use what you learn to refine your leadership skills.

- Think of the last time you attempted to influence someone. If the effort was successful, what worked? If it wasn't, what went wrong?
- When was the last time someone attempted to influence you? What evidence was there that he was operating with honesty, sincerity, and/or ethical principles?
- To what extent do those who follow you trust you? To what extent do you trust them? How can the trust levels be raised?
- What words describe the most influential person you know? Which of those words could also be applied to you?
- Is manipulative behavior ever acceptable? If so, when? If not, why not?

Multilingual Abilities

It was Joseph Juran, another giant in the world of quality, who noted that two languages are spoken in every organization. One is the "language of things," spoken by nonsupervisory employees. The other is the "language of money," spoken by senior management. Managers who lead, he asserted, must be bilingual.

Are you able to speak both languages? If not, it may be time for further training in finance. (An alternative might be to read



The Up Side of Manipulation

Be careful about discounting the advantages of manipulative behavior. If you define manipulation as "getting others to do what they might not be inclined to do so we can meet our own goals," then you'll have to admit you've been manipulating since you were a baby. (Your parents surely did not want to get up in the middle of the night to feed you and yet you manipulated them into doing so.)

Manipulation has a negative connotation only if you're taking advantage of others. When used for neutral or positive reasons, however, there's nothing wrong with it. For example, when you wear your best suit to an interview and carry a résumé printed on expensive paper, you're attempting to influence others to do something they might not be inclined to do (hire you) so that you can meet your own goals.

Jack Stack's book, *The Great Game of Business* [New York: Bantam Books, 1992]. It spells out, in user-friendly terms, how to make every single employee aware of what he costs and what he contributes to the company.)

And the language of things is not just a single language. More and more, it's necessary for managers to deal with areas of specialization that may each have a different dialect. R & D, production, marketing, sales, shipping and receiving, inventory and supplies, personnel—depending on the organization, these functional divisions can each have a particular culture and language.

You've probably learned by now that the boundaries of your language are the boundaries of your world. If you don't have the words you need to communicate with various specialists in the organization, you'll be banned from their world. You need not become an expert in every field, but you should be conversant so you can converse!

Leadership is always an exciting path to pursue. Leadership in the new millennium, however, is more than an exciting path. It is a colorful highway on which traffic moves at breakneck speed. If you've accepted the challenge of leading in today's business arena, you're clearly a person who goes beyond his managerial role. You have faith in your own courage, pride, sincerity, and adaptability. Further, you know you can influence others, in part because you can speak more than one business language. And now you're eager to progress through the following chapters to develop your leadership abilities.

Manager's Checklist for Chapter 1

- ❑ Develop both your leadership and your management skills: both are essential to your involvement in running the organization.
- ❑ Keep a log of your activities so that you can focus better on those that advance the departmental mission.
- ❑ Establish a culture of accomplishment.
- ❑ Challenge the status quo: eliminate "the dumb" and create something of value.

- ❑ Visualize, then actualize.
- ❑ Demonstrate leadership with an "I'll go first" style.
- ❑ Obtain approval for changes not just from those above you, but also from those around and below you.
- ❑ Prepare for opposition. Use the ABCD Approach: Anticipate objections, "Benefitize," Categorize, then Develop the plan.
- ❑ Praise—but be sure that it's sincere, deserved, and unique.
- ❑ Reconcile paradoxes for yourself and your followers. They're a fact of life that managers cannot ignore or simplify.
- ❑ Find ways to avoid being overwhelmed by information.
- ❑ Develop your influence skills. Don't depend on your authority to get things done.
- ❑ Assure yourself that manipulation is not always a bad thing. It's only when it's used for exclusive self-gain that it becomes harmful to others.
- ❑ Make your followers aware of costs, so they understand there's a financial rationale behind most decisions.